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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3523
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3385
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4057
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1214
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 4028

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001380

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: A LOOK INSIDE A TURKMEN EMBASSY

Classified By: Charge Sylvia Reed Curran for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: When Turkmen embassies produce reporting it generally does not get transmitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs mainly because there is no advanced technology used to convey the information between Turkmen missions and Ashgabat, and reporting is considered secondary to attending and organizing events. In addition, all Turkmen mission interactions with headquarters are reportedly controlled by ambassadors. The ambassadors are usually former government officials and seldom career diplomats; their ambassadorships are seen as a reward for previous, governmental work. The Ministry of National Security has influence over ambassadorial appointments to missions, especially posts in countries that could export Islamic extremism to Turkmenistan. Strict government control of overseas posts, has left Turkmen embassies and ambassadors with little room for thinking outside the box. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) A former Turkmen MFA employee, who worked in the Turkmen Embassy in New Delhi, India for eight years, told us that only junior officers produce reporting at Turkmen embassies. According to the former employee, reporting is considered "dull and unpleasant" by more senior Turkmen diplomats and consists of writing news briefs, which are generally translations of the most interesting newspaper articles of the day. In addition, these junior officers are also required to write "references," which are in-depth analyses on a topic, and often draw on academic resources; they can be up to 30 pages. There is no standardized format for the news briefs or references.

13. (C) The former MFA employee added, Turkmen diplomats do not learn whether the Foreign Ministry in Ashgabat used their information and assume that their reports go into a "black hole." Turkmen Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov reportedly relies on the Foreign Information Department of the MFA for his news, instead of relying on Turkmen embassies. The Foreign Information Department tends to gather news from the Internet and newswires and puts together a morning brief for the President, which is delivered daily at 8 am. Furthermore, our contact added, Turkmen diplomats almost never have access to the Internet or email, forcing communication with Ashgabat to become more of "an exercise in

obedience rather than utility."

¶4. (SBU) Our contact stated that Turkmen Embassy interactions with the host government are almost always held at the ambassadorial level. He added that the Ambassador is also the only one authorized to interact with MFA headquarters in Ashgabat. The former MFA employee asserted that by limiting the number of MFA employees overseas authorized to interact with the host government, other foreign governments, and the Turkmen MFA, Ashgabat retains great control over its diplomats. He added that the most active Turkmen missions abroad are in Russia, Turkey, the U.S., the UN, and Iran. According to the former MFA employee, in other less critical countries the senior diplomats mostly attend command performances and other official events and receptions.

¶5. (SBU) The former MFA employee told us Turkmen ambassadors are usually former, high-ranking officials from a ministry or a security agency, but seldom career diplomats.

Ambassadorial positions are treated as rewards for obedient service. Ambassadors may pick prospective candidates for their missions from MFA headquarters to fill key positions at an embassy, but all the candidates are first vetted by the Ministry of National Security (MNS) to ensure they do not allow anyone to go abroad who has a criminal record or links to the underground opposition. The MNS influences Foreign Service appointments, as well as security and consular functions, he added. However, they do not shape foreign policy, except in the cases of Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey, where they are worried about the export of Islamic extremism, drug trafficking, and trafficking in persons.

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: Turkmen diplomats are not provided the tools or opportunity to hone diplomatic skills and affect

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policy. Instead, the Ambassador is the only person in direct contact with the capital, and the Ministry of National Security has tremendous influence over diplomatic appointments and work overseas. Forbidding diplomats to have email accounts or access to the Internet are archaic but effective means of ensuring that the President maintain control at home and overseas. END COMMENT.
CURRAN